



X-Plain™

General Anesthesia

Reference Summary

You may be scheduled to have surgery under general anesthesia. This summary will help explain the benefits and risks of general anesthesia.

Procedure

To prevent you from feeling pain during your surgery, your anesthesiologist will make you fall asleep and you will stay that way until the operation is over. During that time, the anesthesiologist will watch over you and make sure your heart, lungs, and kidneys are functioning properly.

Initially, an IV may be placed in your arm or hand to deliver medications. You will then be given medications that will make you fall asleep. From that point on, you will not be aware of anything until you wake up at the end of the operation.

Your anesthesiologist may put a tube into your air pipe, or trachea. The tube will be connected to a respirator. This will allow you to receive adequate oxygen, as well as anesthetic gases.

After the operation is done, you will be allowed to wake up. When you are able to breathe on your own, the tube is taken out and you are taken to the recovery room or intensive care unit. Nurses will watch over you until you are fully awake.

Throughout the operation the anesthesiologist, with the help of medical instruments called monitors, watches your heart rate, blood pressure, and oxygen concentration in the blood very closely.

Risks And Complications

Because of significant advances in technology and medications, general anesthesia is extremely safe. There are, however, some possible risks and complications. YOU can do a lot to prevent them.

You should make your anesthesiologist aware of any medical problems that you may have such as: heart, lung, or kidney problems; strokes; and liver damage. Previous blood transfusions, diabetes, high blood pressure, jaundice, depression and other psychiatric

disorders should also be reported to your anesthesiologist. You should also tell your anesthesiologist about any previous experiences with anesthetics and how you reacted to them.

It is also important to tell your doctor whether you have snoring problems, and whether you have any loose teeth or dental work, such as bridges and crowns.

It is also very important to make your anesthesiologist and surgeon aware of any medications you are taking, even over-the-counter medications such as aspirin or Advil®. Medications you are taking could interact with anesthesia medications or could cause excessive bleeding during surgery.

It also is important to tell your doctors whether you have any allergies to drugs, such as numbing medications, or to foods, such as eggs. This allows your doctors to stay away from medications that you may be allergic to.

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Because rare reactions to anesthesia may run in families, let your doctor know whether you or ANY member of your family has had any troubles with anesthesia in the past.

You may develop allergic reactions that are discovered during surgery, such as allergies to tape, latex (a substance present in balloons), or solutions containing iodine.

Nausea and vomiting could occur after surgery. This is usually dealt with by using anti-nausea medications.

There is a small risk of lung infections, strokes, heart attacks, and possibly death during or after anesthesia. These risks are very small and are more likely in older people and patients who have medical problems or previous history of strokes or heart attacks.

Because the body lies still during surgery, pressure points may develop. If a part of the body gets too much pressure, this can rarely result in nerve damage, paralysis, blindness, and skin ulcers, depending on the position you are in during surgery. Precautions are taken to prevent this from happening.

If excessive bleeding occurs during surgery, the anesthesiologist, in close consultation with the surgeon,

may decide to give you a blood transfusion. This is done only when necessary to prevent death or significant medical complications.

The blood is thoroughly tested for known communicable diseases, such as hepatitis or AIDS. This blood is very safe, but infections with these known or other unknown diseases could still happen. If, for religious or other reasons, you are against blood transfusions, even in life-threatening situations, make sure to tell your doctors prior to surgery.

Because of the tube being placed in the throat, the throat may feel sore afterwards. While the tube is being placed in the throat, the lips, tongue, teeth and even the vocal cords may be damaged. This is extremely rare.

The site of your IV can rarely become infected. This may need to be treated with warm cloth applications and, rarely, antibiotics.

Your anesthesiologist is prepared to treat reactions to medications used in the operating room. In spite of the best effort, in very rare instances, these reactions could be fatal. It is, therefore, **very important** to inform your anesthesiologist of ALL your known allergies.

Be sure to tell your anesthesiologist if there is any chance you may be pregnant. Special precautions should be taken during the operation.

Summary

General anesthesia is very safe. However, as you have read, there are some risks and possible complications. Let your doctors know in case of any new symptoms that you may have after your surgery.

Most complications can be prevented through good communication. Make sure to inform your doctors of all of your medical conditions, medications, allergies, and previous anesthetics.

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